Santissima Trinita degli Spagnoli in Via Condotti

The **Church of** the **Holy Trinity of the Spanish,** is a church of Rome in the Campo Marzio, the beginning of Via Condotti.

History

The church was part of a convent founded for Spanish Calced Trinitarians. The Trinitarian order of friars was founded near Paris at the end of the 12th century by St John of Matha, and its purpose was the ransoming of Christians taken prisoner by Muslim pirates and slave-raiders as well as during wartime. The saint lived in two small rooms near San Tommaso in Formis, the first Roman convent and hospital of the order; according to tradition he [1]

In 1733 one Padre Lorenzo bought an old palazzo on the present site. This, the Palazzo Ruccellai, was demolished, and after a pause, construction began in 1741. Much of the funding came from Archbishop Diego Morosillo of Lima, former superior of this branch of the Trinitarians. The church and adjoining monastery were built between 1741 and 1746, under Pope Benedict XIV. The architect was the Portuguese Emmanuel Rodriguez dos Santos, possibly with help from Guiseppe Sardi. Disagreements with the order and Santos saw the interior completed by the Spanish architect José de Hermosilla y Sandoval. [1] [2] [b]

In 1784, the convent came under the direct protection of the Spanish monarchy. This was to prove extremely useful, because in 1873 the convent escaped sequestration when the Italian government seized the property of most other convents and monasteries in Rome. The church underwent the

first renovation and upgrades, these were completed in 1788 and also the interior assumed a more pleasant appearance thanks to the restoration and enlargement of decoration. [1] [b]

In 1895 the church was assigned to the Spanish Dominicans. The Spanish Trinitarians had their monastery at San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane. The Dominicans remain in charge, although the convent is now described as a Cultural Institution and College of Religious. [1]

There was a restoration of the interior in the mid 20th century. [1]

Exterior

The church is on the plan of a longitudinal ellipse, within a rectangle formed by the side walls of the adjoining buildings. The ellipse is covered by a tiled roof pitched in several sectors, not a proper dome. The sanctuary and entrance range have their own tiled roofs, and the sanctuary has a small lantern. [1]

The campanile, invisible from the street, is over the far left hand end of the entrance block and faces the back of the church. It is a large slab with three arched sound holes arranged in a triangle, having chamfered upper corners and a little pediment on top. [1]

The main convent buildings are to the left (east) of the church. The church occupies one side of the arcaded cloister, with ranges on the other three sides. All four cloister walks are arcaded. [1]

The major axis of the church parallels the nearby Corso, and so is not at right angles to the street outside. This puts the façade at an angle to the main edifice, with the left hand side further out than the right. The space thus created is occupied by a staircase. [1]

The facade (1) of the church has a concave shape, and has two levels. The fabric is rendered in orange, with detailing in white and carvings in limestone. [1]

The first level has four pairs of Ionic pilasters, with another doubletted pair at the outer corners, on high plinths and supporting an entablature with a dentillated cornice. In front of the four pairs are four columns in the same style, supporting posts projecting from the entablature. The molded door case of the single entrance has a segmental pediment containing a shield bearing the arms of the Trinitarians (a cross in blue and red, but the color has faded). The shield has a pair of drooping flower swags. On the pediment is a very interesting sculpture by Pietro Pacilli, showing an *angel about to free two slaves* joined at the wrists by a real iron chain. In between the column pairs and the outer pilasters are two pairs of windows, the large lower one in each pair with a tasselled frame, and the upper having its sill curved above an archivolt on two little posts. The latter contains a carving of a stag's head. [1]

The second level is treated very similarly to the first, with the same design of pilasters and columns. Above the four columns (not the whole width of the façade) is a triangular pediment within a segmental one. The outer angles of each pediment are brought forward over the posts above the columns. There is a large central rectangular window in this level, flanked by a pair of doubletted Ionic pilasters supporting a broken segmental pediment into which a small window is intruded. This large window lights a gallery in the entrance bay of the church. Above the window is a relief carving of the coat-of-arms of the kingdom of Spain on a drapery, with swags and curlicues and a scallop on top intruding into the triangular pediment. [1]

In between the column pairs and the outer pilasters of this level are two statues in round-headed niches crowned with swags and floating gables. These are of the founders of the Trinitarians, *St John of Matha* and *St Felix of Valois*. Above the statues is a pair of small windows, which light second story subsidiary rooms. A pair of flaming square urn finials occupies the outer corners of the roofline. [1]

Plan
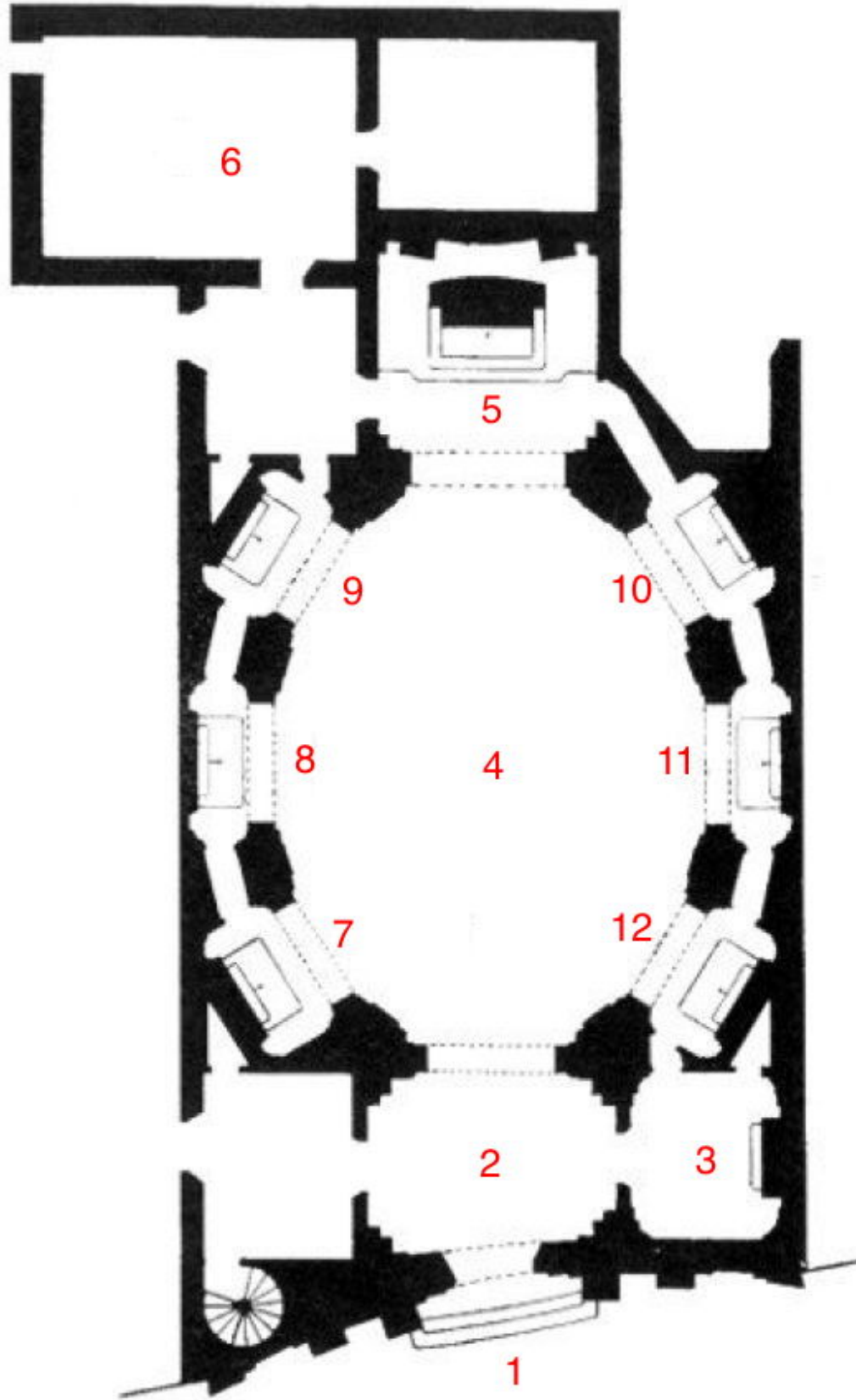
Interior

The church interior is decorated in gold, stucco and trompe l'oeil marble pillars with the nave vault and choir nave frescoes by <u>Gregorio Gugliemli</u>. [2]

On entering, you pass through an entrance bay (2) to reach the church. Flanking this bay are two rooms, the right hand one of which is now a chapel. The interior is elliptical with a little round dome and stucco decorations, and three radial side chapels on each side, vaulted and on a square plan. Doorways connect one to the other, originally allowing priests and servers to reach a chapel for private Masses without disturbing anything going on in the main body of the church. [1]

Chapel of the Sacred Heart (3)

When you enter, before reaching the main church you will find a little chapel off to the right. This is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and was converted from a custodian's room. The altarpiece depicting *Christ the Good Shepherd* is by Antonio González Velázquez, part of a major collection of works by this Spanish artist. He worked in the church while in Rome on a scholarship from 1747 to 1752. To the left is a depiction of *St Michael-of-the-Saints* Argemir (Miguel de Santis). Among the devotional statues here is one of *St Martin de Porres,* who is shown with a broom. He was a Dominican friar at Lima in Peru, and an attractive character. [1]

Nave and Dome (4)

The nave is dominated by the dome. This rests directly on an entablature running down each side of the church, supported on each side by four gigantic tripletted Corinthian pilasters. In between the pilasters on each side are three archways accessing the side chapels; the archivolts of these spring from Doric imposts and do not reach the entablature, over them are winged putto's heads with garlands. [1]

The entrance and sanctuary arches rise higher than the entablatures, and intrude into the dome. Above the entrance arch is a gallery or cantoria for musicians, lit by the central window of the façade. Over the arch are a pair of stucco angels holding a shield and crown. The cantoria carries the symbols of Castile. Above this is a short barrel vault with a fresco of *Our Lady with Trinitarian Saints*, by Gregorio Guglielmi. [1] [3] [c]

In the elliptical vault of the church, represented in a framework oval, is a fresco depicting *The Apotheosis of St John of Matha*, by Gregorio Guglielmi (1748), who was to become noted in northern Europe as a Rococo artist. The dome is divided into eight sectors by ribs, and each sector is coffered in a basket weave pattern by interlacing rib work containing stylized rosettes. The dome is in white and gold. In the pendentives are frescoes of *The Evangelists*, also by González Velázquez from 1748. The rest of the interior fabric looks as if it is in polychrome marble, but this is fake paintwork (marmo finto). [1] [c]

Sanctuary (5)

The little square sanctuary is entered through a high triumphal arch, over which is the Trinitarian coat-of-arms held by a pair of stucco angels with trumpets. Unusually, the sanctuary has its own full dome with a lantern. The small dome has no ribs, and is completely covered by a fresco depicting *Abraham and the three angels*, and *Abraham and Sarah*, works of González Velázquez. [1] [a]

A gold metal tabernacle in the shape of an oval temple is to be found on the main altar. It has a cymatium with lantern and a globe with a cross on top. [a]

The large altar aedicule is convex, with a pair of Corinthian columns in real verde antico marble. These support a semi-circular pediment touching the cornice of the dome, which contains a triangle in a glory venerated by stucco angels. The triangle is a symbol of the Trinity. The large altarpiece depicts *The Liberation of a Slave in the Presence of the Trinity,* and is by Corrado Giaquinto in 1750. [1] [a]

The side walls have a pair of elliptical paintings over the doors. These are also by González Velázquez, and depict *The Holy Founders SS John and Felix* to the right, and *Pope Innocent III Approves the Foundation of the Order* on the left. The Dominicans have hung an icon of St Dominic on the right hand pier of the triumphal arch, and a Crucifix on the left pier. [1] [a]

Side Chapels

The six side chapels are described in clockwise order, beginning from the left hand side of the entrance.

Chapel of St. Agnes [7]
The altarpiece in the first chapel on the left is *The Martyrdom of St. Agnes* by <u>Marco Benefial</u>. The painting is signed and dated 1750. The lamb accompanies the martyrdom, oblivious to events (agnus is Latin for "lamb"). Reworking a prototype by Domenichino, <u>Benefial</u> provides a lucid and cruel representation of the martyrdom, quite different from the placid expressiveness of his contemporaries in the climate of classical revival that prevailed in Rome in the mid 18th century. [1] [a]

The paintings on the side are by <u>Andrea Casali</u>, from 1773. On the left wall is *The Saint Appears Blessed before her Parents* (1773), oil on canvas. On the right wall is *St. Agnes goes to her Martyrdom* (1773), oil on canvas [a]

Chapel of St John of Matha [8]
The middle chapel on the left. This chapel, along with the one on the opposite side dedicated to Felix of Valois, is dedicated to the co-founder of the Trinitarian Order. The altarpiece, *St. Felix freeing Christian Slaves*, is by *Gaetano Lapis* from 1775. The painting, formerly located in the corridor of the monastery, recalls the redemption of the Christian slaves which John de Matha together with St. Felix of Valois achieved in the 12th century. [1] [a]

The paintings on the sides are by <u>Andrea Casali</u> in 1779. On the left wall is *The Vision of St. John de Matha*, oil on canvas. The painting evokes the miraculous vision of the Saint, to whom an angel with the robe of the Trinitarian Order appears. On the right wall is *St. John receiving money from the Madonna for the Redemption of the Slaves*, oil on canvas. The Saint is portrayed as he receives from the Madonna the money needed to ransom imprisoned African and American slaves. [a]

Chapel of the Mary Immaculate [9]
The chapel to the left of the sactuary is dedicated to the Immacluate Conception of Our Lady. The altarpiece is thought to be by <u>Francisco Preciado de la Vega</u> from 1750, while the side panels by <u>Casali</u> depict *The Assumption* and *The Annunciation*, both from 1781. The devotional statue is of *St Rita*, displaying the ulcer that she had in her forehead. [1] [a] [c]

Chapel of Our Lady of Sorrows [10]
The chapel to the right of the sactuary. The altarpiece, *Pietà with Mary Magdalene and St. John*, by <u>Andrea Casali</u>. The symbols of the Passion can be seen in the foreground. The artist's signature and the date 1777 can be read on the unguent jar in the bottom left. [1] [a]

There is quite a collection of this artist's works in the church, many of which show a cheerful use of color. The Pietà here, however, is overtly affective and somewhat chiaroscuro as befits the subject. [1]

The paintings on the side walls, *Christ Fallen Beneath the Cross* on the right wall, and *The Flagellation* on the left wall*, are both **oil on canvas** by <u>Casali</u> from 1777. [a] [c]

Chapel of St Felix of Valois [11]
The second chapel on the right is dedicated to St Felix of Valois, one of the Founding Saints of the Trinitarian Order. The pictures are by the Latium painter <u>Andrea Casali</u> from 1775. The altarpiece shows *St Felix Ransoming a Slave*. The painting has been in the chapel since its creation. It was moved to a corridor of the monastery in 1896 but then returned to its original location. The picture refers to the effort of the Trinitarian saint on behalf of slaves. The objects in the foreground allude to Spanish Royal Family. [1] [a]

The side oil on canvas paintings are both by <u>Casali</u> from 1776. On the left wall is *The Miracle of St. Felix Rescuing a Drowned Boy*. On the right wall is *The vision of St. Felix Chaining up the Devil.* [1] [a]

Chapel of St Catherine of Alexandria [12]
The last chapel on the right is dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria. The paintings are by <u>Andrea Casali</u> in 1771. The altarpiece depicts the saint with the broken pieces of the famous spiked Catherine Wheel on which she was to have been tortured. The side paintings show the wheel actually breaking, and the saint being taken into heaven. [1]

Artists and Architects

Andrea Casali (1705-1784), Italian painter of the Rococo period
Antonio González Velázquez (1723–1793), Spanish late-Baroque painter
Corrado Giaquinto (1703-1765), Italian painter of the Rococo period (also see here)
Emmanuel Rodriguez Dos Santos, Portuguese architect
Francisco Preciado de la Vega (1712-1789), Spanish painter
Gaetano Lapis (1704-1776), Italian painter of the late-Baroque period
Giuseppe Sardi (1680-c.1768), Italian architect
Gregorio Guglielmi (18th cent), Italian painter
José de Hermosilla y Sandoval (1715-1778), Spanish architect
Marco Benefial (1684-1764), Italian proto-Neoclassical painter
Pietro Pacilli (1720-1773), Italian sculptor

Location:
Addr: Via Condotti 41, 00187 Roma
          Coord: 41° 54' 16"N   12° 28' 45"E
Info:
Phone: 0039 06 6793223
Open 07:30 to 12:10 and 16:30 to 20:00
Mass times:
Weekdays :08:00-19: 30
Holidays :08:00-12 :00-19: 30
Holiday eves: 19:30

Links and References

1. Roman Churches Wiki

2. Art-in-Rome web site

3. "Romeartlover" web-page

a. Informational plaques within the church

b. Information from Spanish language pamphlet from the church

c. Donovan, Jeremiah; ROME ANCIENT AN MODERN AND ITS ENVIRONS; 1842; Vol II, pg 174

Other links:

www.060608.it

Official diocesan web-page

English Wikipedia page

"De Alvariis" gallery on Flickr

YouTube video